

RESOLVING AND MANAGING CONFLICTS WITHOUT AGGRESSION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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Abstract

This article undertakes how conflicts which are of international origin could be resolved without using aggression, armament and the likes. This article argues that using aggression in resolving international conflicts leads to loss of lives and properties as well reduction in tourism in nations engaged in conflict. Negotiation which is an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism and a non-violent dispute resolution process is highly recommended in this article as an alternative in resolving and managing conflicts without using any form of aggression in international conflicts. Taking recent events such as the Israel-Hamas conflict and the Rwandan genocide, this article shows that proper negotiation among leaders would have averted the unprecedented bloodshed. This article concludes that negotiation should be utilized more in promoting world peace and development.

Keyword: Aggression, Negotiation, Conflicts, Israel-Hamas Conflict, Rwandan Genocide.

Introduction

Conflict which is inevitable among human beings due to divergent ideas, beliefs, customs and traditions appears unavoidable among nations as well. Instructively, the political and economic aims and objectives of a particular nation differs from another, hence any form of relationship between the nations whether on trade, investment etc. conflicts are bound emerge. International conflicts which involve conflicts between two or more nation-states can also be attributed to inter-group conflict within a nation-state which attracts international debates.

Nation-states in conflict use all form of aggression in resolving their conflict. This however doesn't manage the conflict talk less of resolving it. Lives and properties are lost coupled with hampering tourism in the nations that are actors to the international conflict. With the geometric rate of conflicts among nation-states and inter-group conflicts around the world, one is inclined to assert that World War III shall occur if other means of resolving these conflicts are no utilized. Aggression which involves the use of force (armament) through the military, navy and air force has being the order of the day at the international scene in resolving conflicts. This paper examining some of this international conflicts, argues that there exist other means of resolving

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these conflict rather than through aggression. A conflict can be complex to the extent that a final resolution would be impossible. In addition, it doesn't mean that once a dispute is resolved, it wouldn't arise again. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) which consists of a set of flexible tools for resolving and managing conflicts quickly and at a cost effective manner, stands as the best means of resolving these international conflicts. Amongst the various ADR process, this paper argues that negotiation acts a viable tool in resolving conflicts at whatever level.

Conflicts in International Politics

According to Quincy Wright:

*'War arises because of the changing relations of numerous variables—technological, psychic, social and intellectual. There is no single cause of war. Peace is an equilibrium among many forces. Change in any particular force, trend, movement, or policy may at one time make war, but under other conditions a similar change may make for peace. A state may at one time promote peace by armament, at another time by disarmament, at one time by insistence on its rights, at another time by a spirit conciliation. To estimate the probability of war at any time involves, therefore an appraisal of the effect of current changes upon the complex of intergroup relationships throughout the world.'*¹

In addition to Quincy's view of the inevitability of conflict among states, Michael Nicholson asserts that:

*'A conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent. They may both want to do the same thing, such as eat the same apple, or they may want to do different things where the different things are mutually incompatible, such as when they both want to stay together but one wants to go to the cinema and the other to stay at home. A conflict is resolved when some mutually compatible set of actions is worked out. The definition of conflict can be extended from individuals to groups (such as states or nations), and more than two parties can be involved in the conflict.'*² *The principles remain the same.'*³

John Burton presented the world of human knowledge in showing the complexity of conflicts as:

'...in World Society, a comprehensive alternative to bleak, simplistic, self-fulfilling/self-perpetuating (but always compelling) Realpolitik; in Conflict and Communication, a method for dealing with conflicts within that alternative worldview, through problem solving workshops; and in Deviance, Terrorism and War and in later works, a theory,

¹ Quincy Wright: A Study of War <http://mizygez.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/a-study-of-war.pdf>. Accessed August 09 2014

² Emphasis mine

³ Michael Nicholson (1992): *Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict*, Cambridge University Press

of Basic Human Needs, accounting for deep-rooted nature of protracted, intractable conflicts.'

The international scene is not excluded from conflict. The current Israel and Hamas war in Gaza stands as an example of an international conflict between nation-states and an Israel-designated terrorist group. The players to this conflict include the United States Secretary of States John Kerry; the Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the leader of Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya)⁴ Khaled Meshaal. The conflict which has being reported to have broken out on July 8 2014 has claimed over 1,423 Gazans lives, 8,265 injured and 59 Israelis lives.⁵ On June 12 three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and later found on June 30 who were already dead. Hamas was accused of the kidnapping and murder of those teenagers by Israel in which they killed 10 Palestinians who were members of the terrorist group⁶. In retaliation to this, Gaza launched quite a number of rockets destined for Israel which paralyzed the Israeli society. The consequential effect of this conflict has led to inhabitants of Gaza to leave their homes and shelter elsewhere. It however important to note that the players in this international conflict have divergent demands and interest which further compounds the problem.

The Prime Minister of Israel has demanded that there Israel's operations will not stop in Gaza until certain sophisticated tunnels constructed by Hamas leading from Gaza to Israel are destroyed as well as demilitarize Gaza. Hamas on the other hand wants Israel's dominance in the Gaza strip removed. John Kerry and Ban Ki-moon United Nations (UN) Secretary General however in India sought for a 72 hours humanitarian cease fire agreement on August 1st 2014 between the Israeli government and Hamas which will serve as a process of initiating negotiations between the conflicting parties.⁷ Israeli and Palestinian negotiators headed to Cairo to negotiate on managing and resolving their conflict which has resulted in the death of more than 1,400 Palestinians and 64 on the Israeli side.⁸

The conflict between Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda which led to genocide is worthy to mention. In 1972 the Tutsi army slaughtered 80,000 to 200,000 Hutu⁹. However, from April to July 1994, members of the Hutu ethnic majority in the east-central African nation of Rwanda murdered as many as 800,000 people who were mostly Tutsi minority¹⁰. Prior to the genocide, it has being held that there has being a class warfare between the Hutu and Tutsi¹¹. Belgium which were the colonial master for Rwanda favoured the Tutsi over the Hutus with the resultant effect of leading into unprecedented violence prior to Rwandan independence.

The root cause of the genocide has being attributed to the killing of the Rwandan and Burundi's president in a plane crash. Accusations pertaining to the murder of the presidents were tilting like

⁴ HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement) <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/hamas.htm> accessed August 11, 2014

⁵ abc News: Everything You Need to Know about the Israel-Gaza Conflict <http://abcnews.go.com/International/israel-gaza-conflict/story?id=24552237> accessed August 11, 2014

⁶ Ibid

⁷ John Kerry nails down Israel-Hamas ceasefire days after facing ridicule for failure <http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/07/31/israel-and-hamas-agree-to-72-hour-unconditional-humanitarian-cease-fire-in-gaza/> accessed august 11, 2014

⁸ Michael R. Gordon and Mark Landler (2014): Cease-Fire in Gaza Conflict Takes Effect as Talks are Set The New York Times http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/01/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-conflict.html?_r=0 accessed August 11, 2014

⁹ Bridget Johnson (2014): Why is there conflict between Tutsis and Hutus <http://worldnews.about.com/od/africa/f/tutshutu.htm> accessed August 11 2014

¹⁰ The Rwandan Genocide <http://www.history.com/topics/rwanda-genocide> Accessed August 09 2014

¹¹ Ibid

a pendulum between the Hutu extremists and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). There were mass killing in Rwanda which made more than two (2) million people to leave Rwanda to neighboring countries such as Congo, Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda.

In October 1994, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), situate in Tanzania was established as an extension of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at the Hague, the first international tribunal since the Nuremberg Trials (1945-46) and the first with the mandate to prosecute the crime of genocide.¹² In 1995, the ICTR began indicting and trying a number of higher-ranking people for their role in the Rwandan genocide.¹³

Apart from the above stated examples of conflicts, there are numerous international conflicts which may not even be reported in the media for consideration but the main issue resolves around whether there exist other means of resolving or managing these conflicts other than through aggression and inhuman violence. Negotiation serves as an alternative to aggression.

Negotiation

It has being broadly defined as including all cases in which two or more parties are communicating, each for the purpose of influencing the other's decision. Nothing seems to be gained by limiting the concept to formal negotiation taking place at a table, and much to be gained by defining the subject broadly.¹⁴ According to Chamber English Dictionary, negotiation means to bargain, to confer for the purpose of mutual agreement or to arrange for by agreement.¹⁵

It is imperative to assert that conflicts emerge out of grievances. Hence, one must first look to the incidence of grievance to establish the baseline potential for conflicts. Where leaders of reputable nations cannot sit down and iron out contentious issues without resorting to aggression and violence, world peace may be placed on a scale of balance. Using negotiation is paramount in maintaining world peace and development as parties, nation-states and ethnic-groups will create avenues for accommodating each other or the extent of resolving their ever-rising issues. Even the former president of the United States of America John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1914-1963) encourages the use of negotiation in resolving international conflicts. In his words:

*'Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.'*¹⁶

There exist process and strategies which must be followed in other to achieve the best result of negotiation. These strategies are however dependent on the scenario best suited for it. They include:

- Distributive Approach
- Integrative Approach

The integrative approach involves the negotiating process in which the disputants work towards integrating their interests as effectively as possible in their final agreement. The aims of using the integrative approach are: (1) to create as much value as possible for both sides, and (2) to claim

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ See Roger Fisher: Negotiating Power: Getting and Using Influence in J.W. Breslin & J.Z. Rubin (eds.) Negotiation Theory and Practice, The Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

¹⁵ Chambers English Dictionary 7th Ed. Edinburgh, W & R Chambers Ltd, 1990 p.961

¹⁶ John F. Kennedy Inaugural address January 20, 1961 <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres56.html> accessed July 13 2014

as much value as possible for their own interests.¹⁷ Essentially, to create value and discover mutual benefits, or common ground, on some issues requires the parties to share information and present more options than is typical of distributive bargaining, in which the parties seldom share their true interest and seldom seek new options, but instead focus on exchanging concessions and reaching agreement on one issue¹⁸. The integrative approach is usually considered as a win-win approach owing to the fact that conflicting parties do not feel to have lost anything, but rather achieved something.

The distributive approach otherwise known as the competitive or win-lose approach is a negotiation strategy which brings about a zero-sum outcome. Parties in dispute assume that there is enough to go around, hence one party must win at the expense of another party. A fixed pie is used to illustrate the issue in dispute, thus where a party gets more pie, he is termed as the winner while the other party having little or no pie becomes the losing party. The use of this strategy has brings about hard bargaining, strain relationship between parties who still have tendencies of working together in the future etc. However, it has being contested that distributive bargaining is important because there are some disputes that cannot be solved in any other way as they are inherently zero-sum¹⁹. For example, if budgets in a government agency must be cut 30%, and people's jobs are at stake, a decision about what to cut is likely to be very difficult. If the cuts are small enough that the impact on employees will be minor, however, such distributive decisions can be made more easily²⁰.

Irrespective of these contentions, Fisher and Ury²¹ maintains the use of the integrative approaching using the following techniques:

1. Separate the people from the problem
2. Focus on interest not positions
3. Generate a variety of options
4. Insist that the negotiations be based on some objective standard

Negotiation phases

Everyone is a negotiator²² and there are phases which must be followed to achieve best results in a negotiation process. These phases include:

1. Preparation
2. Opening
3. Bargaining
4. Closing or Agreement

The preparation phase involves gathering factual information about the issues and alternatives. Intense preparation leads to better outcome as well as reduction in anxiety of negotiation. The second phase which is the opening or presentation phase deals with presentation of initial offers and demands. Contentious issues are clarified and understood at this stage. The bargaining phase involves the application of either the integrative or distributive strategy to reach an agreement. It is at the bargaining phase a negotiation can lead to a mutual agreement or a deadlock thereby

¹⁷ Pearson: Integrative Bargaining <http://www.prenhall.com/behindthebook/0131868667/pdf/CarrellCh04final.pdf> accessed August 05 2014

¹⁸ Harvard Business Essentials (2003): Negotiation, Boston: Harvard Business School Press

¹⁹ Brad Spangler (2003): Distributive Bargaining <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/distributive-bargaining> accessed August 11, 2014

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Roger Fisher, William Ury and Patton B. (1991): Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In, 2nd Ed. New York: Penguin Books

²² Ibid

leading to a breakdown. Where there is a deadlock at bargaining phase, the negotiation can breakdown and when this happens, immediate actions must be taken to prevent the situation from being irretrievable²³. The final phase which is the closing or agreement phase closes the negotiation process. A mutual agreement is reached which put in a form acceptable to both parties.

It is imperative to assert that the use of aggression in international politics concerning conflicts fosters the inevitability of a world war with its attendant threat of unimaginable bloodshed. Resolving our differences through a more-civilized manner will go a long way in maintaining world peace. The Israel-Hamas crisis could have being avoided if incisive negotiations were initiated. The Israel government ought to have made proper investigation as to who killed the teenagers rather than arresting and killing the Palestinians. It was due to these killings that made the Hamas terrorist groups to kick-start the firing of rockets to Israel. Assuming the Israel and Palestinian government met and negotiated on devising out plans of arresting and indicting the culprits that killed those teenagers as well conjuring up a strategy for destroying the sophisticated tunnels which was used by the Hamas terrorist group between the Gaza strip and Israel, lives and properties would be saved rather than being lost. It would be a win-win situation. The United States of America (USA), the Israel and Palestinian governments considers Hamas as terrorists. The interest of the United States, Israel and Palestine would be accommodated if they could negotiate and agree on a strategy of getting rid of the terrorist group without putting innocent lives in danger.

Furthermore the Rwanda genocide is another conflict that has left lasting marks of remorse at the United Nations. If negotiation was employed in 1992 to bring about a ceasefire between the Hutus and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) which was largely made of Tutsi refugees during the reign of Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, then there is no basis for not employing that same strategy to investigate the people that assassinated President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi and the Rwandan President and manage the historical ethnic-conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi people. The United Nations ought to have initiated negotiations between these conflicting parties rather than sending 5000 troops²⁴ to suppress the conflict. Negotiation indeed stands as an alternative to the use of force in resolving conflicts. Negotiation was used during the cold war era (1945-1991) where the major players to this war were the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Conclusion

Conflicts will be of such character that no suppressive means will contain it. Attempts to suppress it will lead, on the contrary, to exponential increases in conflict. One could go on to predict a total catastrophe.²⁵ Conflicts can lead to positive outcomes when it is well managed provided the appropriate strategy is employed. The human propensity for violence resulted from the recognition that tools, a product of man's early intellect and manual dexterity, could be used as weapons²⁶. This same intellect also made humans far and away the most successful species in utilizing cooperation, facilitated by the power of speech, to achieve mutual goals and benefits.²⁷

²³ Robert Heller and Tim Hindle (1998): Essential Managers Manual, London, Dorling Kindersley Limited

²⁴ Ibid, The Rwandan Genocide <http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide>

²⁵ Sandole Dennis: John Burton's Contribution to Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: A Personal View http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol6_1/Sandole.htm accessed November 10, 2013

²⁶ Konard Lorenz (1963): On Aggression, San Diego: Harcourt Brace

²⁷ Wrede Robert K (2003): Communication and Conflict: Managing Verbal Aggression in Mediation http://www.mediate.com/articles/wrede_R.cfm accessed August 12, 2014

However, the world is evolving and owing to the increase of conflicts both internationally and locally, aggression cannot manage the conflict least resolving it.

Negotiation as a non-violent dispute resolution mechanism stands as an alternative to using aggression or violence in resolving disputes. It is a dialogue between disputants intending to reach an understanding, hence accommodating their respective interests coupled with resolving their points of differences. Even if the conflict appears intractable, negotiation serves as the viable tool in managing the conflict until when it is capable of being resolved. Nation-states and their respective leaders should never fear to negotiate as it would promote world peace and development.

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